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A major painting by the great English portraitist, Thomas Gainsborough, has recently been purchased by The Cleveland Museum of Art and was put on exhibition yesterday for the first time.

The painting is of George Pitt, First Lord Rivers, who stands full-length before a landscape background. He is resplendent in a scarlet military coat with emerald lining and gold buttons. In the best 18th century fashion he wears this garment over a snowy waistcoat and breeches. A three-cornered hat is in one hand; the other grasps his sword.

Lord Rivers was a personal friend of Gainsborough and the artist painted this sympathetic and elegant portrait in 1769 between Lord Rivers' diplomatic missions to Italy and Spain. These were Gainsborough's best years, during which he brought to his earlier informal style the greater grace and elegance of Van Dyck and before painting his more decorative later compositions in London.

Gainsborough thought so highly of the Museum's picture that he sent it to the very first exhibition of the Royal Academy in 1769.

The Museum's newest picture comes directly from the descendants of Lord Rivers and joins the well known pictures by Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Lawrence in the collection. "The triumvirate of great English portraitists is now splendidly represented in Cleveland," said William Talbot, Assistant Curator of Paintings, "we have sought a fine full-length Gainsborough for many years and now we have succeeded." The English paintings can be seen in the Museum's gallery number 9 with a new installation of English and French paintings, furniture and silver.